

OFFICE MEMO

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DIVISION OF BEACHES AND PARKS  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

February 20, 1959

To Superintendent, District 3

From Park Supervisor - Brannan Island State Park

Subject Presentation of Talk and Showing of State Park Film,  
Sierra Club - Tehipite Chapter

I am attaching a transcript of the major portion of my talk as presented before the Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter, in Fresno, California on February 17, 1959, at 8:00 P.M.

The program was conducted in three sections: 1. Talk, "The Effect on Park Values of the Proposed Low-level Route Through Emerald Bay and D. L. Bliss State Parks" (Based on facts supplied by our Sacramento office). 2. Showing of the film, "California Holiday". 3. Question and answer period.

The reception of this talk by a crowd that filled over half of the County Schools Building Auditorium was very gratifying. Perhaps the most gratifying aspect was at the conclusion of the presentation, the majority of the audience separated into discussion groups and continued asking questions until after 11:00 P.M.

It would be interesting to note that I received no direct or indirect indications following the presentation that anyone present considered the low-level proposal in favor over the alternate high-level scenic route.

ROBERT V. MILLER  
Park Supervisor,  
Brannan Island State Park

RVH:dm  
cc: M. H. Whittaker

attach.

THE EFFECT ON PARK VALUES OF THE PROPOSED  
LOW-LEVEL ROUTE THROUGH  
EMERALD BAY AND D. L. BLISS STATE PARKS

Yesterday, my District Superintendent, Clyde Newlin, called me into his office and said, "Bob - inasmuch as you were the first Ranger assigned to Emerald Bay State Park, I would like you to drive to Fresno tomorrow to show the new Park film and present a talk regarding the proposed bridge across the mouth of Emerald Bay."

Now, most of my talks have been given in a mountain setting to groups of campers enjoying a blazing campfire. Tonight, of course, we can't have the campfire, but the topic is one that is vital to everyone interested and who has a keen appreciation for the natural beauties of our state. The natural scene of our state is a heritage that you and I can be justifiably proud.

First of all - by a show of hands - how many of you have visited Emerald Bay at Lake Tahoe? That's wonderful - almost everyone here in the auditorium. You can then appreciate the magnificent setting of Emerald Bay and D. L. Bliss State Parks.

As you know - the Division of Beaches and Parks is dedicated to providing a Public Service. One of our responsibilities is preserving the natural scene in our State Parks. We are faced at the present time with a proposal to cut a highway through two of our most beautiful parks and have a low level bridge erected across the mouth of Emerald Bay.

My purpose tonight is simply to put before you some of the effects on the Park values to this proposal.

Let me read an editorial from your own newspaper, the Fresno Bee:

Priceless Asset

"In an article in Life magazine, D. L. Bliss State Park at the mouth of Emerald Bay at Lake Tahoe is deservedly included as one of the 50 most beautiful camping places in the United States.

"Lake Tahoe itself is known universally as one of the world's great beauty spots, though people living in this area may forget its uniqueness because of familiarity.

"It is hard to understand how any responsible organization or thinking individual can support plans which would destroy or damage the rare qualities of Tahoe or Emerald Bay and D. L. Bliss Park.

"Yet there are groups working to have a bridge built across the entrance to Emerald Bay as the easiest way of enticing more tourists to drive around the lake.

"The reasoning, of course, is that with more tourists there will be more business and more money to be made serving them. The fact the proposed bridge would damage the State Park severely and mar the natural beauty of the bay apparently means little to these groups.

"Enlightened self interest should tell them a comment such as Life Magazine makes for Bliss Park is more valuable than a high speed highway. And if the bridge did exist, the Bliss Park certainly would not qualify as one of the nations 50 most beautiful camping spots."

Let us explore this thought a little further. What is the effect on Park values of a bridge at the entrance to Emerald Bay and the approach on a new low-level route across D. L. Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks?

Against a backdrop of Alpine peaks of the lofty Sierra Nevada, D. L. Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks preserve for public use and enjoyment miles of the most scenic shores of Lake Tahoe. This is one of the celebrated beauty spots not only of California but of the nation. For this reason conservation organizations and individuals have opposed the proposal for a new low-level highway and the bridging of Emerald Bay. On a statewide and national basis they have taken the position, as has the California State Park Commission, that all other possibilities for serving the needs of highway traffic should be fully explored before even considering the defacement of Emerald Bay and the two State Parks.

We have had repeated requests for a statement of the Park point of view. Some of the objections that have been raised against a low-level route are:

1. The approaches to a bridge across the narrows of Emerald Bay would destroy a new campground on the south bay shore. Because of steep, rocky terrain, alternative sites for relocation of the much needed camping facilities are unavailable.
2. A new low level route would bisect both parks with an expressway, making extremely difficult administration of the area for recreational purposes. The problem of noise, especially from heavy, faster moving trucks, in closer proximity to all recreational developments would destroy the restfulness of the campgrounds.
3. A low-level route, including the huge cuts, fills, and a bridge, would add another prominent scar to the scenic landscape, and therefore would encircle Emerald Bay with a ring of bulldozed hillsides which would promote additional slides.
4. The present high-level road provides the most scenic view of all Lake Tahoe and Emerald Bay. Preservation of this gem of California and Nevada scenery is of public interest to the State and Nation.
5. Engineers are proud of their profession and it has been demonstrated in the past that, given enough money, they can meet the challenge involved in designing an improvement of the existing route, making it safe for reasonable speed for through traffic as well as for the sightseers who comprise the bulk of the travel. California's outdoor recreational opportunities are now economically important enough to be considered on a par in importance with other factors in routing of roads.

6. These areas under the protection of the State Park System are protecting at least one small portion of the entire shoreline of Lake Tahoe from urbanization and commercialism. Full scale land-use and zoning studies are now being contemplated by a prominent foundation to protect the outdoor recreational qualities which are rapidly disappearing from the Lake Tahoe area.

7. Urgency in settling this traffic problem can in no way be geared to the development of a faster route for access to the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, for it is known that neither a new route nor improvement of the existing route can be accomplished by 1961.

As I have mentioned, there is another proposal - and one which the Division of Beaches and Parks favor very strongly, and that is to improve the scenic high level route and tunnel through that slide area that forces closure of the road during the winter months. Let me draw a few comparisons with respect to the two proposals:

1. Both the low-level route with the bridge and the high-level scenic route with a tunnel are feasible.
2. The total miles involved for the low level route is 5.72. For the high-level scenic route is 7.72 or 2.03 additional miles over the low level route.
3. The cost? Based on two lanes only is \$4,615,000 for the low-level estimate. Remember, this is based only on the two lanes - not for the four lanes which is proposed for later construction. For the high-level scenic route? \$3,770,000, which indicates a saving of \$845,000. The cost of construction tends to be an important point in this controversy. Consider this - T. Fred Bagshaw, Assistant Director, Department of Public Works, stated on February 6, 1959 that the Division of Highways will make improvement of \$1,000,000 in the present high-level route even if the low-level project is also realized. Thus, the true cost of a tunnel and approaches would be only \$3,770,000.
4. What is involved in the construction of both of these proposals? First, let us consider only the low level proposal.
  - a. Earth and gravel fill along Lake Tahoe from north point of Emerald Bay to 1.1 miles north before alignment heads west through the center of the Park.
  - b. Earth and gravel fill along Lake Tahoe from the south point of Emerald Bay to State Park line - 1800 ft.
  - c. Cut completely virgin timber forest north point of Emerald Bay.
  - d. Cut 142 plus ft. of right of way.
  - e. The bridge will be 40 ft. wide, 1410 ft. long, 50 ft. above water, connecting with fill, 50 ft. high, 120 ft. wide (minimum) for 1500 ft. north from that point.

Compare this to the proposed high-level scenic route -

- a. No fill.
- b. No appreciable change from present alignment.
- c. Tunnel-bore (1300 ft.) hidden from view.
- d. Minor cuts inland west of D. L. Bliss State Park on the new alignment.

What more can be said?

In conclusion, let me leave this thought with you -

Writing of his first sight of Lake Tahoe, Mark Twain said:  
"We plodded on, and at last the lake burst upon us, a noble sheet  
of blue water...walled in by a river of snow-clad peaks that towered  
aloft full 3,000 feet higher still. As it lay there with the shadows  
of the mountains brilliantly photographed upon its still surface, I  
thought it must surely be the fairest picture the whole earth affords..."

Showing of Film, "California Holiday".

Presented by: Robert V. Miller  
State Park Ranger II

# ACTUAL STATE PARK ATTENDANCE IN VISITOR-DAYS

	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>
D. L. Bliss State Park	67,049	53,335	84,957
Emerald Bay State Park	10,305*	10,461	50,132

\*(New in August 1954, and facilities not yet well-known.)

## ANNUAL STATE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC COUNT BY DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS

For one typical Sunday and one typical weekday, in midsummer

	<u>July 1955</u>	<u>July 1956</u>	<u>July 1957</u>
State Sign Route 89 at point between Camp Richardson and Emerald Bay	<u>Sun. 17</u> 3328 <u>Mon. 18</u> 2315	<u>Sun. 15</u> 1865 <u>Mon. 16</u> 1473	<u>Sun. 14</u> 3868 <u>Mon. 15</u> 2813

D. L. Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks adjoin each other, at Emerald Bay on the southwest shore of Lake Tahoe. A major slide occurred on Sign Route 89 at the head of Emerald Bay in December 1955 (after the highway had closed for the winter), and the route remained closed throughout the 1956 season. During 1956, the developments at D. L. Bliss State Park were accessible only from the north, and those at Emerald Bay State Park only from the south. The traffic count figures were taken at a point southeast of Emerald Bay.

2-B-THE FRESNO BEE  
Fresno, Cal., Tue., Feb. 17, '59

## Tahoe Span Issues Are Parley Topic

The issues involved in the proposed construction of a 1,410 foot low level bridge across Emerald Bay at Lake Tahoe will be discussed tonight at 8 o'clock at a meeting of the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The meeting will be in the Fresno County Schools Administration Building auditorium at Mariposa and M Streets.

The speaker will be Robert Hiller, an official of the D. L. Bliss Memorial State Park at Lake Tahoe, one of two state parks the proposed bridge and connecting highway would bisect.

The public is invited.

The bridge is being opposed by the Sierra Club because it would cut a six mile swath through the Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks.

## **Emerald Bay Span Is Called Costlier Route**

McClatchy Newspapers Service

FRESNO — Robert Hiller, chief ranger of state parks in the area of Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe, says a recently released study of costs shows a low level bridge across the bay would cost more than modernizing the present high level route.

Hiller spoke at a meeting of the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club. He presented issues for and against the proposed construction of the bridge and connecting highway.

The removal of two hairpin turns and construction of two tunnels in slide areas, Hiller added, would improve the present route and make it safe.

Proponents of the low level route have stressed its low construction cost as a factor in the proposed construction.

Hiller said he is opposed to the bridge.